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SUBJECT: ZANZIBAR: PEMBA SIMMERS

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**¶1. (SBU) SUMMARY:** Several recent Embassy trips to Pemba, the second principal island of the Zanzibar archipelago (holding about 40 percent of the self-governing region's population) confirm that it remains among the least developed regions of Tanzania. Persistent power problems and a rapidly declining agricultural-based economy combined with growing inflation and rising food costs make frustrations there palpable. Although nearly all elected officials on Pemba are from the opposition CUF party, ruling party CCM chose to hold its 2009 Revolution Day celebrations there and sponsored a multi-day tour of the island by Tanzanian President (and CCM Chairman) Kikwete. During his visit, Kikwete made locally inflammatory remarks about the continuance of CCM rule in Zanzibar beyond the 2010 elections. Locals complain that more than 2,000 mainland troops sent to the island for the Revolution Day ceremony and for Kikwete's protection detail will stay on the island through the 2010 election. While this might not be true, it is symptomatic of the degree of mistrust that prevails. END SUMMARY.

**¶2. (U)** February 11-12 ZAO and Embassy Grants Officer traveled to the rural Zanzibari island of Pemba to follow-up on an Ambassador's Self Help grant of USD 3000 presented to a local cooperative to grow seaweed commercially (septel). Whereas Pemba is the second principal island of the Zanzibar archipelago and holds about 40 percent of the self-governing region's population, it remains among the least developed regions of Tanzania. Fundo Island, location of the seaweed cooperative grant, can be called the "Pemba of Pemba." It is reachable only via an hour-long boat ride, followed by a several hundred meter walk across a knee-deep coral shelf. Nonetheless, about 3,000 people reside there in three villages. It supports a single elementary school, also shared by the scattered inhabitants of three adjacent, even more remote islands. The Sheha (local administrator) of Fundo said that we were the first foreign officials ever to visit the island, and the log book of the small immigration outpost in the port of Wete where we embarked confirmed this: the two-dozen or so entries of foreigners making the trip over the last few years listed mostly Europeans and a few Japanese who stated as their purpose of travel "scuba diving." Meanwhile, Zanzibar Affairs Specialist also made two trips to Pemba in mid-February to monitor the selection process for a USG-funded youth exchange program ("YES"). This report encompasses our collective observations.

**¶13. (U)** Lack of good roads, a teacher shortage, poor phone service and other infrastructure issues plague Pemba, as they do much of rural Tanzania. However, Pemba's main problem is power generation and delivery. Even after the November debacle that left the island's two diesel-powered generators sidelined for a fortnight (ref A), the power plants still remain rickety. Throughout this year, electricity never has flowed for more than 12 hours daily, and only then intermittently. This has caused an upsurge of private generator use among those who can afford it. However, fuel delivery to the island has not met the demand, so petrol for fishing boats more often than not comes from jerry cans sold out of the back of cars at black market prices. Power for refrigeration throughout the island has been among the first things sacrificed by small businessmen, so even when fisherman do make the petrol investment and go to sea despite the expense, their catch must be sold and consumed right away. A prominent fish exporter told us that this is the worst market he has had to endure in 20 years of doing business.

A Tanzanian NGO worker based in Dar es Salaam bragged to us how cheap she was buying fish, and we later saw her at the airport trying to check in excess baggage full of seafood.

**¶14. (U)** Meanwhile, state control of the clove industry in Zanzibar, most of it coming from Pemba, has long remained a source of resentment against the CCM-controlled government. That complaint has grown more acute. Cloves are harvested once a year, starting around Oct-Nov. and shipped around the beginning of the new year. This year, the government cut the price from TSH 3,000 per kg to TSH 1,800 per kg (while growers claim the dock price in Mombasa, Kenya, is the equivalent of TSH 16,000 per kg). Many growers have gotten out of the business, and few are re-planting. Locals claim that state-control of the clove business is a deliberate move by the ruling CCM party to punish Pemba for its support of opposition party CUF.

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**¶15. (U)** In Pemba's capital of Chake Chake (population about 35,000), there is only one functioning restaurant, few taxis and no cold drinks to be found. When the generator of the town's two hotels kicked on, ZAO saw several dozen local ladies come with buckets to collect water from the hotel's outdoor spigot. The only local television station (government-owned) has ceased transmission, and the employees there no longer bother to show up for work.

**¶16. (SBU)** Save the Children - UK (strictly protect) reports of dehydration and malnutrition in the remote, northeast peninsula above the town of Micheweni. The NGO's Zanzibar Director confided to ZAO that she is nervous about the security of her staff, especially in that region. She recalled that in May of 2008 following collapse of the reconciliation talks between CCM and CUF (called "Muafaka") and the short term arrest of "Pemban elders" for treason, some rural communities blocked the provision of food aid and threatened staff, saying that the problems were political and needed to be solved through pressure on the regional and national government. Currently Save the Children is implementing a cash transfer program in that district. The expatriate overseeing it said that there seemed to be increased numbers of police check points, but he had not encountered any trouble.

**¶17. (U)** Adding to the tension, in January the ruling CCM party decided to hold its Revolution Day anniversary at the Gombani Stadium in Chake Chake, followed by a multi-day tour of the island by Tanzanian President (and CCM Chairman) Kikwete. (NOTE: The 1964 "revolution," which featured indiscriminate violence against Arabs and others considered pro-Sultanate, had few supporters on Pemba. Historical resentments are still fresh. END NOTE.) During his Pemba visit, Kikwete made locally inflammatory remarks about the continuance of CCM rule in Zanzibar beyond the 2010 elections and hailed the "benefits that continue to spring from the revolutionary Zanzibari government." Heretofore, most opposition CUF members and their Pemban supporters reserved their ire for Zanzibari President Karume because Kikwete at least paid lip service to reconciliation. That he should now come during bad times and praise "progress" was at best perceived as callous. Worse, at one Pemban CCM rally attended by Kikwete and Karume, a perhaps over-zealous speaker boasted that in 2010 CCM would have an absolute majority on Unguja

and "take 8 of the 19 House seats on Pemba." CCM currently has no House of Representatives seats on Pemba, and many Pembans are wondering aloud about the specificity of a possible vote count almost two years before the election.

¶8. (U) Adding greatly to the tension on Pemba is the widely repeated story that 2,000 troops arrived in Pemba from the mainland the week prior to Revolution Day, moved into existing army camps, and have not departed. There is fear that they will remain through the 2010 election. Officials deny this is the case.

COMMENT

¶9. (SBU) COMMENT: ZAO did not personally notice more security personnel during his visit to Pemba (although under "normal" circumstances, there are more check points and more troops per capita than around Dar es Salaam or on the main Zanzibar island of Unguja, itself a veritable armed camp when compared to the laid-back mainland.). If there were more troops on Pemba, they must be hunkered down in garrison, as the streets of Wete and Chake Chake were as desolate as ever due to the economic shut-down. Embassy Defense Attaché commented that garrisoning 2,000 troops in a new location for a prolonged period would be unrealistic given known GOT military budget limitations. What is important, however, is that the belief that there is an "occupation force" on Pemba is widespread and even repeated by Pembans resident in the main island of Unguja.

¶10. (SBU) Even assuming the added troop figure is true, and given the common belief that they all would be registered to vote, 2,000 votes would not be enough to swing the outcome for CCM. Such an influx of troops would, however, be a formidable force for intimidation. In the build-up to the 2000 and 2005 elections, large numbers of security personnel were brought into Unguja and Pemba. In addition to physical intimidation during voting, there also were reports of women and children from the families of opposition leaders being rounded up as "hostages" to curtail opposition activities. At the very least, there were confirmed reports that families in some Pemba districts fled their homes due to the

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increased presence of security personnel.

¶11. (SBU) With or without additional troops, conditions on Pemba are bad, and government boasts that times are good ring hollow, or worse, sound like taunts to those whose quality of life appears to be deteriorating. Zanzibar Affairs Specialist heard renewed rumblings for Pemban secession from Zanzibar (ref B). No one speaks of an independent Pemba, a ludicrous concept given its small size and economic weakness. Rather, Pembans seek to disassociate themselves from the rule of Unguja/Zanzibar and instead associate directly with the mainland, like Mafia island further to the south, which administratively is part of the mainland's Coast Region.

¶12. (U) A CCM District Commissioner with whom ZAO spoke seemed to earnestly believe that the planned Norwegian-funded power cable from Tanga on the mainland would be completed before 2010 and all would be well. The Norwegians have not publicly promised such a deadline, however. Although the Norwegians have informally told their USG counterparts at the Millennium Challenge Corporation that the fabrication of the planned cable is actually ahead of schedule in Norway, their prior experience with projects in Tanzania has caused them to remain publicly cautious; thus, they maintain that their cable project will be completed sometime "in 2011." Meanwhile, an expatriate from Tanga told ZAO that Tanga, the presumed source of power to Pemba, was currently facing severe power shortages of its own. It is clear that Pemba will be the battleground in the lead-up to the 2010 elections, but just how CCM (and CUF) intend to fight that battle remains to be seen. END COMMENT.

ANDRE